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Networks
of European pressure groups

From the origins of the European Community
to the European Union

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Introduction

The European Community (EC) and its new deeper, extended form, the European Union (EU) are reflections at community level of the pluralism that applies in their member democracies. This pluralism implies in particular the existence of multiple and autonomous decision-making centers and organizations. It is political, socio-economic and cultural as can be seen by the presence of diverse ideologies and values, the existence of several political parties and free elections at regular intervals, not to mention the multiple groups and associations which reflect the diversity of interests, values, objectives and activities. It is obvious that the EC and even the EU do not have the same sociopolitical pattern as their member States. Nevertheless, though it is still in the process of formation, they have the main features of an emerging political community. In fact, their political vocation and destiny are already embodied in their embryonic, but dynamic system which projects, reflects or reproduces to some extent the main characteristics of democratic systems. Indeed, European integration seems to be moving towards the establishment of a new European democratic and federalist Union.

Even if at present the EU cannot be compared with traditional democracies, in some areas it possesses important powers which have obligatory and direct effects not only on member States, but also on individuals, enterprises and associations. The growing power of the EU is giving rise to a large, growing movement of informal integration of national and regional pressure groups.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on the network of European pressure groups and to dispel the common perception that there is only a one-way relation, namely from various pressure groups towards the EU. It has been shown that the relation is two-way. This paper is organized as follows : Part I presents the evolution of pressure groups at European level. New trends in the relations between EU institutions and pressure groups are the subject matter of Part II. In my conclusion, I argue that there is a strong and mutually beneficial two-way relation between various interest groups and the EU.

The developing power of the EC has led to a reaction from those groups that are most directly affected. In order to make sure both that they are informed and that their interests are represented and defended, the various groups concerned have created new structures for themselves at the EC level. A parallel relation has thus emerged between the official powers of the EC and the private powers affected by it. These groups, formed at the European level, have neither the solidity nor the effectiveness of professional representation at the national level. Moreover, since such groups are themselves a part of the evolution process of the political structure, they readily adapt to new political circumstances. Though these European professional bodies are not comparable to the national groupings, they cannot be seen as similar to international associations either. The EC commission estimated that approximately 3,000 interest groups employed up to 10,000 lobbyists in Brussels in 1992¹. These groups include not only various trade associations, large companies and law firms, but also various nonprofit groups and representatives of local and regional governments. Their action is both more intense and more concrete than that of international associations, and corresponds to issues with which the Community is concerned. On the whole, the birth of new groups, as well as the strengthening of the weak links which existed before, was, and still is, caused by the emergence of a new decision-making center at the continental level. In turn, this center of decision needs to win over and to consolidate support.

i. Pressure groups

The four phases of formation

Roughly speaking, the emergence of the socio-economic groups within the regional European framework has passed through four phases :

The **first wave** appeared at the end of the 1940s when the Marshall Plan and Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) were launched. At that time, some ninety new organizations were set up.

The **second wave** appeared during the setting up of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) itself, from 1953 onwards. Some ten new bodies,

¹ Communication of the European Commission, "Un dialogue ouvert et structuré entre la Commission et les groupes d'intérêts", Brussels, 2 December, 1992, p. 2.

grouping together the main interests, saw the light of day: in 1953 the Federation of the Iron and Steelworkers of the European Communities (FEDEREL), the liaison committee of the European metallurgical industries, the Committee for the Study of Coal Producers (CEPCO), the club of steel producers, as well as two European specialized offices of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions and of the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions were set up. These groups were not content simply to inform and to be informed but tried to intervene in the decision-making process of the ECSC.

The **third wave** occurred with the entry into action of the EC in 1958. It was vaster and had a stronger impact. From then on, the creation of multiple professional organizations began in earnest. Following the example of the EC itself, these organizations were concerned with the main sectors of economic and social activity. Some, such as the Union of the Industries of the EC (UNICE), COPA (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations of the EC) and the secretariat of the trade unions of the Six came into being at the very moment when the institutions of the EC were formed ; others, such as the Committee of Consumers and Interprofessional or Specialized Bodies (COMITEXIL) were set up just as the regulatory powers of the EC were beginning to take effect and to influence various interests. Sometimes the formation of these organs was spontaneous. Sometimes, it was prompted by invitation or even by pressure from the Commission, as in the case of the consumer organizations. Whatever their origin, their action in the field of simultaneous information and consolidation between the members and of exertion of influence corresponded to real needs. The form of these groups and the intensity of their action varies from case to case, the best structured bodies often being those whose interests are most directly affected or threatened. In short, whatever the original motivation of these professional groups, they all serve, in various degrees, to bring pressure to bear on the EC authorities. The truth is that the EC does not have all-embracing political powers. It only uses a still imperfect political procedure, taking decisions as a last resort. Moreover, these procedures, contrary to what happens in national politics, apply only to certain specific economic and technical matters.

The **fourth wave**, which again was a weaker one, coincided with the emergence of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) of which fifteen professional organizations are members. However, the national groups have not felt any urgent need to be reconstituted in this intergovernmental organization

because, as in the OEDC, they can use the classic, intermediary channel of their own governments. This channel of influence suffices because the decisions of the new decision-making center—the Council—are taken with the participation of national representatives and gradually by unanimous approval.

Of course, the formation of the EC has created a new situation. The powers of the Community no longer belong exclusively to an intergovernmental institution. They are the result of an organic and often obligatory collaboration between the Council and the Commission. To the extent that the Commission fulfills an autonomous function, either by taking its own decisions more frequently or by working out proposals to be submitted to the Council, it becomes a center of special interest for the groups.

The tandem Council-Commission is the central mechanism of the EC and this center of decision naturally attracts pressure groups. Certainly these do not completely ignore other bodies such as the Economic and Social Committee. But insofar as it carries no effective weight in the decisions of the Council and of the Commission, the groups treat it rather as a future than as a present channel of intervention. Their relation with the European Parliament is even more ambiguous since, at this time, it is only an indirect conveyor of resolutions producing no results.

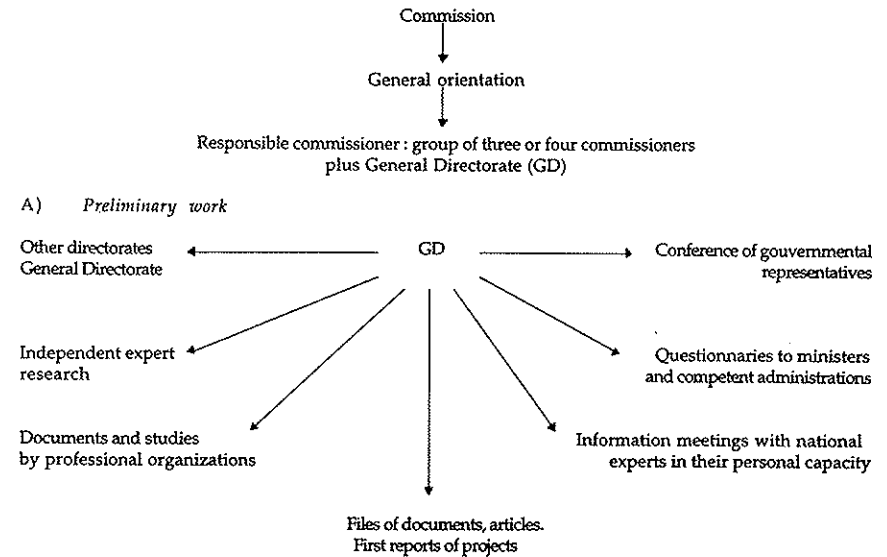
Plan of decisions

Diagram I (see next page) shows the way in which decisions are reached in the EC and illustrates the role of various institutions in the elaboration of Community acts. It outlines the longest path for the production of the basic rules or directives. The line thus drawn can be shortened, cut or altered. It is only a model for reference. For instance, if the basic regulations for agriculture have followed a longer route, the complementary rules for their implementation have been established by many short cuts. As these policies had already been decided upon, there was no need for the same long series of preliminary consultations.

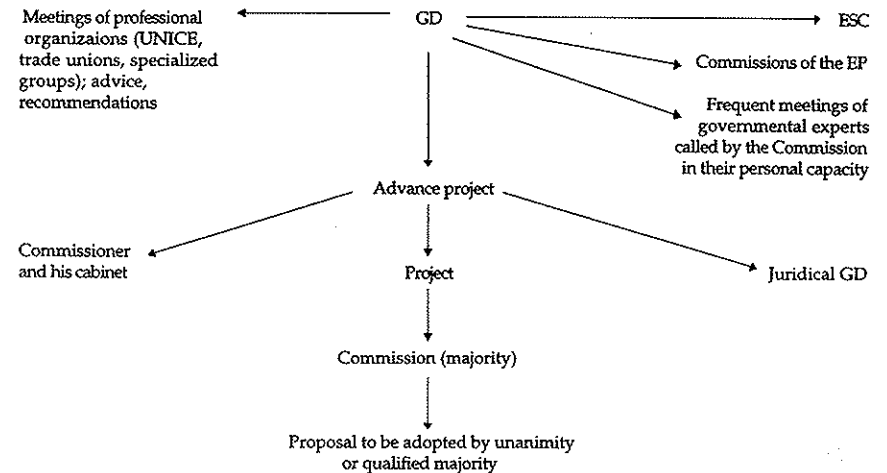
But, the diagram must be altered in the opposite direction in cases where the Council alone takes decisions. This does not often happen. But when it does, it is usually on important matters (transition from the first to the second stage ; solution to the 1965 crisis). Then the whole Commission phase is practically suppressed.

Diagram I : Decision-making in the European Community

First phase of the Commission



B) Consultations



Sources : Treaty, basic statutes, proposal and initiatives of the Commission, initiatives of the Council, government or private organizations

The more the Council works alone, the more it tends to monopolize the attention of the groups. Their action is closely related to Diagram I, though not identical with that of the intergovernmental organizations. In fact, as the professional structures at the Community level in the EC start to function, the national groups can bring pressure to bear either directly or through them on their governments by working on public opinion. It will be observed that the Court of Justice, an important institution in the EC, is missing from the diagram. Yet its role in annulling or adjusting, or on the other hand in confirming the decisions of the Council and of the Commission is well known. But the Court remains, whatever its influence on Community decisions may be, the one institution of control which is the most impervious to pressure. This explains its absence from a diagram which is designed to illustrate pressure groups and their influences.

Professional structures

The acts of the institutions of the EC differ from their counterparts in the other organizations in that not only are they binding and compulsory, but they also have direct results. They bring pressure to bear directly on groups and individuals without passing through the apparatuses of the respective States. A direct relationship is thus established between the Community organs and groups or individuals. No wonder that given these circumstances the groups have tried to set up a defensive mechanism against the power of the EC. Over and above the protection and the resources with which they are already supplied, they strive to counterbalance this power by setting up their own permanent structures on the scale of the EC. The organized action of the groups is correlated with collective action by States and by the Commission, with the result that the current is no longer all one-way, but flows from the EC towards the groups as well as in the other direction. The network has become much more complex than was foreseen by the Treaty of Rome ; influences work in many directions between the principal elements — the institutions and the States, while various groups and many groupings have grown up alongside them.

The more important, immediate and autonomous the powers (as exercised by the autonomous institutions), the more likely it is that the groups will try to organize themselves at the level of these powers. There is a certain parallel to be

drawn between the degree and the nature of these powers, on the one hand, and the structure and action of the groups on the other. Besides, the creation of these European groupings is proof of the importance of these powers. The groups do not act gratuitously. When they establish a network of structures and action, it is because they are trying to satisfy a real need. In order to be effective, their action is directed solely at the real power centers. If the groups try to influence the Commission, it is a sign that the Commission fulfills an important function in the formation, execution and control of decisions. The action of the groups on the Commission is a tribute paid to its genuine importance.

However, it would not be correct to rely solely on this explanation. If the groups answer a need—and their survival and development prove this—their creation or their reinforcement are often, at least in part, the work of the Commission. It is clear that the Commission has defined its policy, which consists in consulting preferably or exclusively the professional organs which act at Community level. By refusing in principle to consult national associations, the Commission has forced them to produce common organs. Two main criteria seem to guide the policy of the Commission: the representativity and the autonomy of the EC associations. Thus, a committee can form part of a larger association, grouping the EC and the EFTA, for example, but it must show a sufficient degree of independence. In addition to this indirect pressure, the Commission has sometimes been the driving force: the Consumers Committee is the result of the initiative of Sicco Mansholt who also played a part in the establishment and strengthening of the structures which group the activities connected with agriculture.

The motives behind this active policy of the Commission are many. However, the most important are the following five:

- ◆ The Commission prefers to avoid intervention in the interests of professional bodies ; problems should be discussed by the groups themselves within their common organs, which should then present the institutions of the EC with agreed positions or take note of disagreement among their members.
- ◆ The Commission also needs these associations not only to obtain technical information, but also in order to use them as an information network for EC problems.

◆ In this way a sphere of support for its activity is formed around the Commission. During the 1965 crisis in the EC, most of the groups adopted positions favorable to the Commission and rose up in defense of the EC when it was seriously threatened.

◆ Last, and by way of exception, the Commission can sometimes try to influence governments by using the national groups which are members of the European associations.

Up to a point, the preparation by the Commission and the adoption by the Council of the list of exceptions for the Kennedy Round provide a notable example of this procedure. Regarding the activity of the pressure groups, there was not only unilateral pressure, but also influence exerted by the institutions on the groups, or through them, on the national centers of power. It would be difficult, however, to say which of these two counter-influences is stronger. The action of the groups is conditioned by circumstances, by the relative importance of the respective group and by its position with regard to other groups.

Structure of the groups

On the national level, the groups correspond to three broad categories: employers, agriculture and labour. The employers, for example, have a central organ for industry (UNICE), one for trade (COCCEE) which was later dissolved, and the banking federation ; approximately one hundred organs in branches, sections or sub-sections in industry, sixty in the field of services, and twenty or so in agricultural activities. If, for instance, one were to look in greater detail at the organization of the industrial groups one would find three main structures: the central organizations (UNICE), the intermediary or interprofessional committees, such as COMITEXTIL for textiles or for chemical industries and the specialized associations for plastics, detergents, pharmaceuticals or wool and cotton, etc. The two latter types of associations do not take part directly in UNICE, with which they keep in touch. In terms of economic policy, planning and general problems with anti-trust legislation, for example, UNICE is responsible for the whole industry. This distinction on the structural and functional level determines to some extent the action of the groups. The division of work is established, in particular along the dividing line between general, intermediary and specialized functions. In exercising its functions, UNICE is called on to try to

coordinate the positions and the claims of other groups. This is an arduous task in an environment in which the responsibilities and the links are still ill-defined. In practice, the various groups maintain contacts, collaborate and occasionally give each other mutual support, in spite of the lack of organic links.

Other factors also influence the behavior and activity of the groups. The predominance of vertical interests, of which we have given an overview, over horizontal ones is one of them, as for instance the Permanent Conference of the Chambers of Commerce of the EC countries. Another is the multiplicity of specialized associations in the representation of a particular sector of economic activity. In this case, while the former take a stand on general questions, the latter restrict themselves to defending their particular interests. But the limitations on the range of their activity do not reduce the amount. Indeed, these organs tend to express their opinion on general questions almost as much as on matters which directly concern them. But, one may well wonder if the action of these specialized groups does not gain in effectiveness when it is confined to their area of interest.

Typology of channels and of influence

If one admits the close relation between the groups and the centers of decision, one is justified in distinguishing between the main and the secondary channels in the Community. The first are found at the level of the Commission, of the Council and of the governments ; the second at the level of the Economic and Social Committee and of the European Parliament. One can also divide methods of action into direct and indirect ones, as well as informal and official (the latter taking on forms which are more or less institutionalized).

Direct and indirect actions

At the European level more than at the national, central organizations, unions or associations resort to general action and often try to intervene through declarations, studies and proposals. On the national level, organizations representing interests often take effective and decisive actions. Thus, when the trade unions of the workers or of the farmers want to influence opinion,

they use a wide range of methods, from warnings to mass meetings and even strikes, obstructive actions or acts of civil disobedience.

But on the European level, such means of pressure are seldom used. UNICE, COPA and the unions organize congresses, meetings or general assemblies and publish their resolutions. Exceptionally, COPA and its members resort to demonstrations during some decisive meetings of the Council in Brussels or Luxembourg dealing with agricultural matters.

Indirect influence is often intended to back direct pressures brought to bear on the institutions of the EC. During the 1965 crisis, UNICE, COPA and the trade unions took a stand in favor of the EC and against the French, as did many other groups. They tried to bring their weight to bear directly on the governments, since the Commission was not involved. In these conditions, direct pressure could only be exercised against the so-called *chaise vide* on the governments on a national scale. Since the French government was the major cause of the crisis, most of these interventions were addressed to it. For the same reason the French groupings were called upon to play a more active role. Thus, the French farmers acted on two levels : first, as the driving-force within COPA, which only endorsed the text which they had composed and which was intended to support their action by mobilizing European public opinion. On the other hand, on the internal level, the French farmers acted as a pressure group by using direct channels, making representations to the government, or taking part in the presidential campaign. In fact, in the autumn of the same year, the French had to vote for the first time in order to elect their President. This was the clear example of the interpenetrating of European and national activities and interests. It showed that the separation of these two spheres became permeable and their interactions one of the main new features of the EC. Because of the particular form the crisis took - opposition of one government to the Commission and to the other governments - the difference between direct and indirect action at the national and European levels was evident.

In terms of channels at Commission level, the Commission has not, in principle, adopted the procedures of the United Nations or of the Council of Europe, whereby consultative status is granted to international or European associations. However, the Commission does accept some of the groups as spokesmen and acknowledges them as correspondents. The Commission is guided in this pragmatic choice by the criterion of representativity and the autonomy of the respective professional groups. Yet, there are some cases in which it maintains only informal contacts with associations which seem to fulfill

both conditions.

Official and informal channels

We have drawn a distinction between informal and official channels. The first include every kind of contact which the professional groups establish and maintain with the Commission: meetings, private discussions, etc. However discreet and difficult to follow they may be, they are nonetheless effective. Besides, the content as well as the range of these relations depend on the ultimate influence of the groups. The content of the relations varies from simple exchanges of information, data and technical studies to information, advice and guidance for tenders. Although these contacts are private, they can take the form of genuine consultations. Their nature is not fundamentally different from those which develop at the national level.

Informal relations can be established between the different types of groups, including groups of national interests, business groups, European or Community groups of interests and the Directorates and Departments of the Commission. Nevertheless, one fundamental difference persists according to the groups concerned: for the professional European groupings, and in particular for those which are regarded as the spokesmen for their sector, this is an additional channel which supplements the official ones.

The fact that it is subsidiary or supplementary quality does not diminish its importance which, as national experience has shown, is far from negligible. On the contrary, when a European group is not consulted officially by the Commission, the informal channel remains the only approach available. This lends prominence to the channel which becomes privileged, as in the case of business concerns, and can also be particularly important to those groups which do not dispose of a complete set of channels at the official level. Thus, for example, the Permanent Conference of the Chambers of Commerce has no official channels: the Commission does not consult it and it has no representative in the Economic and Social Committee. Under these conditions, informal channels become a precious instrument. As is well known, the Secretary General of the Permanent Conference, with offices in Brussels, personally contacts the officials of the Commission. There is also fairly intensive technical activity.

A similar kind of monopolistic situation is found at the level of national orga-

nizations and business groups, but with the difference that these can both use official channels as well, by means of the European professional groups of which they are members. The employers or the French farmers can try to influence the attitude of UNICE or of COPA and thus ensure that their wishes are taken into account by the Commission. In principle, the Commission does not maintain regular official contacts with national groups separately. But some of them take part in the work of the Economic and Social Committee and of the various consultative agricultural committees.

Official contacts for the groups of business interests are more often undertaken by intermediaries. Indeed, they must pass both through the national professional organs and through a European one to reach the Commission. Here the distance becomes greater, but sometimes it is made up for by the weight of influence of some giant concerns. It is clear, for instance, that this distance is reduced to a minimum for European motor car producers who are few in number but very important. In fact, the sheer weight of these concerns allows them to develop effectively all available informal channels.

Although the European groupings often act through official channels, they do not neglect the informal ones. Regular contacts are established at every level. Thus the presidents of the central federations represented in UNICE hold regular meetings with the Commissioners. On the permanent staff level, relations are closer and almost daily; the Secretary General of UNICE and the permanent delegates are in constant touch with the high officials of the Commission; the same holds good for contacts at the level of experts and cadres. Contacts are often easier between compatriots. They are also smoothed by professional or personal affinities, and the fact of belonging to the same social circle or political party can be a positive factor.

These may take institutionalized or non-institutionalized forms. The various types of 'hearings' and information meetings can be counted among the non-institutionalized channels. During the Kennedy and the Tokyo negotiations, for example, genuine hearings took place, organized by the Commission. During the drawing up of the list of exceptions, the groups interested were consulted and they collaborated in apportioning exceptions. These information sessions and consultations dealt with the problems of the EEC and its commercial policy.

The most interesting aspect of this non-institutionalized collaboration is the contribution of the groupings to the drawing up of proposals or other acts by the Commission. They intervene on several levels: in the study phase, the Commission allows them to contribute by asking them for technical informa-

tion; in turn the Commission supplies the groups with its documentation and keeps them informed of its various plans. At this stage, the action of the groups is neutral or objective; experience has shown that this is by no means the most negligible method of influence used by professional groups. At the more advanced stage, the Commission goes on to hold consultations with the European groupings and the national experts in a personal capacity. Without dismissing the effective role of the groups, it is generally admitted that the national experts carry the most weight during the process of elaboration — a point which it is necessary to remember, in order not to overestimate the influence of the groups. This influence, which is difficult to assess exactly, is exercised by their participation in various working parties called by the Commission, by their individual attitudes, by their advice and studies as well as through direct and informal contacts. These interventions occur at the level of professional experts in the working parties as well as at the highest levels, as for instance when the president of UNICE addresses the President of the Commission directly.

These various activities mostly arise over projects of the Commission itself. The intervention usually follows the activities of the Commission, but sometimes it precedes them. Group initiatives have lately become more frequent. To take only one example, the Federation of Bankers of the EC has formulated several proposals: the elimination of discrimination arising out of legislative regulations, the suppression of all taxes on cheques and commercial drafts within the EC. COMITEXIL and many other groups continuously put forward their own proposals and suggestions to the Commission. In this way, they take an active part in the development of the Community, by urging and helping the Commission to undertake and to carry out a multitude of tasks.

Institutional channels can be classified under two headings: those channels giving access to participation in the preparation of general policy decisions; and those giving access to participation in administrative functions. In the first case, the Economic and Social Committee provides a channel, if only on a consultative basis, for the various categories of interests which are represented in it. Whereas the mechanism of informal consultation is reserved essentially for European organizations, it is the national groups which sit in the Economic and Social Committee, although this is not tantamount to formal representation. The European organizations are brought into the Committee as coordinating bodies. UNICE, for instance, coordinates the representation of the employers;

or COPA, that of the farmers ; the European trade unions fulfill the same function with regard to the trade unionists who are members of the Committee. Thus, the central organs which, as previously mentioned, participate in the preparation of the Commission's proposals, are also present at a later stage of the process, namely when complex negotiations between the Commission and the members of the Council are embarked on. As for participation in the administration, the Consultative Committee for Social Welfare and the consultative committees of various agricultural sectors provide the best examples. Their practices do not differ much from those of similar committees in the administrations of various governments. Here again, whereas national groups are called to sit in the European organizations, groups such as COPA assume the function of coordination according to the categories of their members. In this way, the groups intervene both at the level of execution and of administration.

By and large, these are the main channels at the level of the Commission. Their effectiveness certainly varies, but none of them appears to be neglected by the European groups, which tend to penetrate all the mechanisms at all levels. One of the rapporteurs of the Union of Craftsmen of the EC (UAEEC) recommended as early as 1963 that each national federation of craftsmen should try to obtain a seat in the consultative committees. This desire to be present does not necessarily reflect the actual effectiveness of the organs concerned. But, its very existence indicates that the strategy of the groups is aimed at placing their spokesmen in all the channels which bring them, or could one day bring them, nearer to the power centers of the Community.

Other channels

It is generally admitted that it is difficult for the European groups to influence the Council as such. The groups often submit their studies and documents to the Council but find it somewhat inaccessible. Direct intervention is an exception, as for instance the dispatch of telegrams, or the organization of large-scale demonstrations by COPA during the agricultural *marathon* (a term which describes a specific procedure during discussions of some general issues, on which a decision must be taken in order to avoid a complete deadlock ; hence day and night meetings are held over long periods). Indirect access can be obtained by using the institutionalized channel of the Economic and Social Committee which is consulted by the Council. As a rule, however, the national groups press in the classic manner through their own governments: direct con-

tacts with the Council and with the permanent representatives take place very rarely. One may assume that some national groups try occasionally by private contacts to influence the position, if it is not too rigid, of their permanent representative in Brussels ². Sometimes the European organs, when there is complete agreement between their members (which seldom happens), can attempt to influence the Council through these members and their national governments.

Among secondary channels, we have already noted the role of the Economic and Social Committee. The role of the European Parliament was in that period scarcely more important. Having had no real grip on the power of the EC, the European Parliament was rarely lobbied. In addition, since it had only a consultative function and its powers of political control existed only on paper, it merely offered, in contrast to the Economic and Social Committee, an indirect channel. The situation changed substantially after the direct election of the European Parliament and the adoption of the Single European Act and has done so even more since the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty.

The activity of the groups

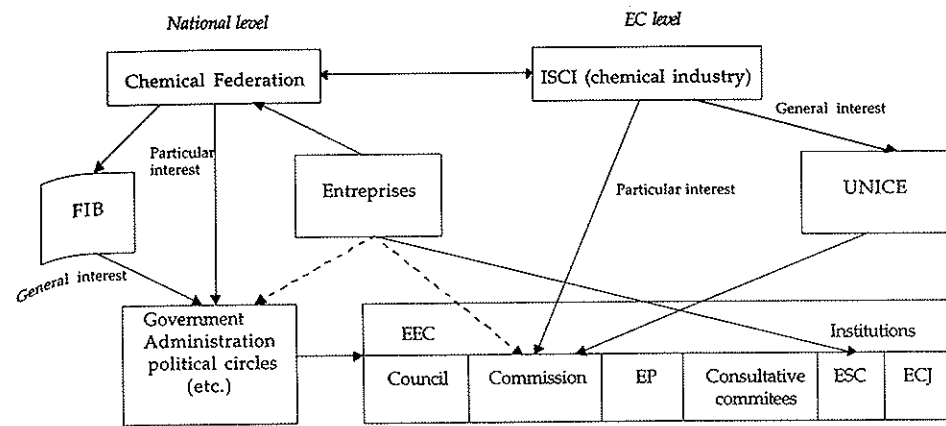
Diagram II (see next page) shows the activity of the groups at the national and EU levels. It certainly does not cover all possible situations. In the cases of the International Secretariat of the Chemical Industry (ISCI) and of UNICE, Diagram II can accurately present their actions. But if one replaces the ISCI, for instance, by COMITEXIL, the situation is changed because COMITEXIL is a group which does not willingly act through UNICE and prefers to approach the Commission directly. In spite of such discrepancies and inadequacies, Diagram II can however be of some help in summarizing the complex character of the activity of the groups and the combination of typical pressure group action on the one hand, and action on the European scale, on the other.

Taking as a starting point the particular interest of a national federation, several possibilities exist. At the Community level, this interest may coincide with the interests of the other federations which are members of the European organ: in the present example this would be ISCI. In such a case, action will take place at the level of the EC, and of the Commission in particular, with ISCI

² German and Dutch representatives are apparently more open to this dialogue with some groups than are the other delegates.

acting as spokesman through the available channels. If the action concerns a purely professional question, three possibilities are in principle open: the action of ISCI might suit the policy of UNICE, in which case UNICE would support it ; or it might be a matter of indifference to UNICE, which would then remain neutral ; but ISCI could also be opposed to the policy of UNICE, thus giving rise to a conflict between two European organizations.

Diagram II : Activities of pressure groups on the national and European levels



Legend

- Regular or official channels ———→
 Informal channels - - - - -→
 EP European Parliament
 ESC Economic and Social Committee
 ECJ European Court of Justice

If the action of ISCI were to involve more general interests, the same patterns would be reproduced, but with the difference, this time, that the agreement or the conflict would be over matters which are within the jurisdiction of UNICE. The coincidence of the particular interest and of the wider point of view of UNICE leads, as happened in the struggle against anti-trust legislation, to com-

mon action. What about the other central groupings? On the whole, at the national level, a central federation or central organization can face three situations. In the first, the interests of a national group coincide with the interests of other federations which are members of the European grouping. In this case, the action of the national group, through the channel of its own government, goes in the same direction as that of the European group and provides it with additional support. For example, in the case of the 1965 crisis, the pressure of the French farmers on their government was extended to the Community level through COPA, which acted as intermediary. The second situation arises when the interests of the national group run contrary to those of the European group. In such a case the national group may make common action impossible and bring pressure to bear on its own government. This occurred with the German farmers' opposition to a uniform price. Alternatively, the national group may align itself with others on a general question, but oppose through its own government the application of a particular measure. This occurred, for instance, when the French National Council of Employers, although they supported the EC, later opposed the expected application of the customs union. A third situation occurs when the interests of the national groups do not conflict with the European interests. In these circumstances, the national groups are free to act through the traditional channels. The above are only a few examples of possible contingencies. In reality, the main variations, the complex network of associations or groupings (central, intermediary, specialized, both European and national, plus business groups) provide an infinite variety of combinations.

The last remark about Diagram II is in connection with its one-way appearance. In fact, influences are not all one-way, running from a group towards the Commission. The Commission frequently tries to influence the groups and to win their support. For its technical and specialized work, it often requires the recommendations of professional organs (the work of COMITEXIL, or specialized groups), their advice and suggestions. This need explains the process of consultation. In cases of difficulty or crisis, the supporting action of the groups is of considerable value, as their reaction to the 1965 crisis showed. On other occasions, the Commission can rouse or stimulate the action of the groups. Indeed it may well be that during the *marathons*, the Commission asked the groups for their help in furthering its proposals or achieving successful compromises. The drawing up of the list of exceptions for the Kennedy Round is one

example which is often quoted: during its hearings and negotiations with the groups, the Commission succeeded in drafting a list of exceptions, and the groups undertook to bring the necessary pressure to bear on their own governments. Thus a precarious compromise was in the end confirmed by the Council. In these cases, the groups did not bring pressure to bear on the Commission, but acted in favor of it. Thus, they have not always been the originators, but sometimes the targets of influence.

II. New trends

New groups

The freedom of movement and freedom of establishment set out by the Single European Act sped up the formation of groupings in the service sector. The Committee of Commercial Organizations in the EC countries (COCCEE), a kind of business confederation, had disappeared in 1978 and a more flexible and varied system was set up in its place involving several central organizations. At the same time the free circulation of persons, the recognition of diplomas and the freedom to exercise professions abroad have given a new impetus to associations in the liberal professions. Only the agricultural sector — the most integrated since the development and implementation of the agricultural policy — has not undergone any very substantial change. In fact the Committee of Agricultural Organizations in the EC (COPA) and the specialized organizations are distinguished both by their high degree of representativity and by their influence. At the time of the reform of agricultural policy, the COPA mobilized agricultural forces in defense of farmers' incomes. As in the past, it is to be expected that pressure will be applied in all sorts of ways ranging from disseminating technical papers to adopting common positions and organizing demonstrations by farmers in Brussels and in other capitals ³.

³ Dusan SIDJANSKI and Ural AYBERK, "Le nouveau visage des groupes d'intérêt communautaire", pp. 43ff. in Dusan Sidjanski and Ural Ayberk, eds., *L'Europe du Sud dans la CE : analyse comparative des groupes d'intérêts et de leur insertion dans le réseau communautaire*, Paris, PUF, 1990 ; Jean MEYNAUD and Dusan SIDJANSKI, *Les groupes de pression dans la Communauté européenne, 1958-68 : structure et action des organisations professionnelles*, Brussels, Editions de l'Institut de sociologie/ULB, 1971, 733 p.

The trade unions are represented by the European Trade Union Confederation (ESC) which, in spite of its 40 million members, has played only a relatively low-key role because of the traditionally limited importance of social policy in the Community. However, its recent activity shows how new prospects are opening up for the ESC following the revitalization of social policy, the adoption of the Social Charter, and possibilities for collective negotiation at Community level. The result will be that the confederal structure will be supplemented by further federations and trade union committees, of which there are currently only twenty, including the powerful European Federation of Metalworkers created in 1971. In addition to sectoral organizations such as the Textile Trade Union Committee, there are Trade Union Committees in the large European companies such as *Philips* or *Airbus*. It seems inevitable that the intensification of wide-scale transnational activities will encourage various union bodies to expand in line with European multinational companies — a concrete example of the spill-over effect generated by European integration in the area of social dialogue.

The creation of the European Confederation of Executives in 1989 is a response both to the need for a status for managerial staff and executive mobility and to potential openings for participation in social dialogue with employers. With the number of executives on the increase and the impact of the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty, the field of European influence and action is progressively extending to wider and wider spheres ⁴. Just as the networks of interest groups in local collectivities and regions are integrating into national networks, these networks are integrating into European networks as the field of Community and European activities expands around the main pole of integration, the EC.

This regrouping process also affects the domain of new public-interest groups in which there are two networks of influence in the areas of the protection of the environment (EEB-European Environmental Bureau) and of consumers (BEUC-European Bureau of Consumers' Unions). Despite its lightweight structure, the EEB is managing to mobilize the most dynamic players in this

⁴ Although the European Confederation of Executives claims only around 800,000 members, their number is very much on the increase and is up to nearly 2 million in Great Britain and about 1.5 million in Germany and France, according to figures issued by the Association for Executive Employment (APEC), *Le Monde*, 12 July, 1990.

field and to form coalitions between national organizations and the Greens in the European Parliament. Differences between national conditions have not prevented successes in the struggle against pollution, especially vehicle pollution. Moreover the objectives of the EEB largely coincide with the concerns of the public, whose opinions are creating a climate broadly favorable to the adoption of certain environmental measures. As regards the BEUC, it and its members have an even more important task to do, given that in an internal market the application of mutual recognition may lower levels of consumer protection, especially in countries already benefiting from higher levels. Hence, there is a need to establish certain common standards guaranteeing a minimum of protection for the whole of the single market.

Likewise, new forms of promotion are emerging that bear more than a little resemblance to Jean Monnet's Action Committee or the European League for Economic Cooperation. Thus several leaders of some of the most prestigious European multinationals (*Volvo, Fiat, Philips*) created a forum in the early 1990s to support the achievement of the great European objectives including the single market without frontiers and the Economic and Monetary Union foreseen by the Maastricht Treaty⁵. Another action in favor of the ECU and the European Central Bank has been initiated by the Association for a European Monetary Union which, with its more elaborate structure, is dedicated to furthering an aim that is more precise but quite essential for the future of the EC. The Association includes more than 170 large European companies employing approximately 3.5 million staff in the twelve member States. Its president is the former chairman of *Philips* and its vice-president is Giovanni Agnelli. This association works in cooperation and side by side with the Committee for a European Monetary Union : under the co-presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt, it is composed of seventeen senior bank chiefs, nominated in the same way as the members of the Commission. Each applying its own particular methods, these two promotional associations carry out activities which converge in favor of Monetary Union, encouraging and supporting action of governments and Community institutions.

⁵ At the time of the creation of the forum, *Philips* estimated that the costs it incurred because of the existence of internal frontiers were equivalent to three per cent of its turnover.

Evolution of networks

In the beginning, these influence networks were organized along traditional lines, but they have evolved in many ways. First, they developed in specialized technical sectors, diversifying increasingly as they strove to adapt to the complex realities both of individual countries and of the Community, as well as to the nature of the various activities involved in achieving the particular objectives they set for themselves. Consequently their modes of organization, membership and decision-making procedures along with their ability to vary influence considerably. While to begin with the consensus rule was *de rigueur*, so as to maintain cohesion between members and interests that were often very dissimilar, this practice has proved to be very ineffective insofar as the resulting, often vague compromises could not have more than a very weak impact on Community decisions. Majority decisions or the method of majority combined with reports were therefore used. Thus, by better adapting to the requirements of the Commission, these networks of influence have been able to increase their impact on decision-making centers.

At the same time, the interest groups have progressively widened their membership according to the growth of their activity and the widening membership of the Community. Thus interest groups in neighboring countries, and in particular the EFTA countries and members of the European Economic Area, have in most cases been associated with the work and discussions of Community groups.

Another trend that seems to be developing is a tendency to make organizational forms more flexible, thanks to structures that are more lightweight and effective, as they are able to exploit the communications networks and mobilize the resources of their members as the need arises. Communication and mobility emerge as key factors in this new trend because of the need to adjust to the variety of questions handled at Community level and the various forms of intersecting cooperation, more or less durable, that result.

The rapidity of technological and economic change requires new forms of organization that are more adaptable and dynamic and which favor more flexible networks of influence able to carry out more rapid actions. Therefore, structures tend to be less rigid and hierarchical, favoring an expansion of horizontal relationships — thanks to the role of coordination, orientation and sup-

port fulfilled by the permanent secretarial staffs in Brussels. Less cumbersome and bureaucratic, these secretariats are also efficient because of their ability to use and consult numerous committees of experts from national organizations and to exploit the various networks of influence and competence by acting together. As relationships grow closer and meetings are multiplied, excessive concentration in Brussels has been avoided. Meanwhile, these groups are developing their networks of communication with the Community and with governments through personal contacts and relationships. The introduction of the fax and electronic mail connections are speeding up communication and consultation and shortening response times, without reducing by the same token the role of personal relations which are now more selective, concentrating more on essentials. These perfected methods of communication also make it easier to handle the complexities of reality and make it possible to avoid over-simplification or over-standardization. Thus complexity can be coped with and cultural diversity is once again becoming a positive element and a trump card in a changing world.

A new generation is bringing radical change to institutions and society — a phenomenon already evident in the network of European groups: the new generation of leaders made up of young, dynamic and efficient managers has replaced the pioneers. Its arrival at the head of the European network has brought a fresh drive and a new style: key positions in various organizations are now held by relatively young managers who are helping to remove the traditional distinctions between the leaders of the private sector, public sector, and employers' and workers' organizations. Frontiers are vanishing not simply between States but also between public and private sectors, between employers and unions, to the extent that psychological barriers are disappearing and leadership styles and management forms are converging.

Other indicators need to be taken into consideration, in particular the cohesion and organization of the interest groups, together with their level of competence and representation. In addition to these elements, there are the human and material resources available to the group. Wealth is of course a factor of influence, even if it is not the only criterion in a world of high technology, where knowledge is also a form of new power. For example: groups for the protection of the environment are short on material means but have frequently been able to attract the support of top-ranking scientists. The competence of the leaders of these groups is one of the keys to success, but paradoxically personality is far from being of merely secondary importance.

In addition to those already mentioned, there are other factors which are highly relevant to the degree of influence of an interest group, its means of access to the authorities, its use of its resources, its means of exerting pressure, and its capacity to form alliances with other groups. However, although they are very reliable, these measures enable us to evaluate only the potential influence of interest groups and not their real influence ; only empirical analysis can provide the data for assessing the effective influence of an interest group. Such assessment is clearly easier to carry out in a limited sector than in more general areas of activity. One definite result emerges from numerous studies: European institutions, and in particular the Commission, are in continual contact with European groups that provide them with information, studies and indications as to the division of interests and forces within the Community. In turn, European groups receive information on the EC projects and policies. Thus there is a constant two-way flow of information, creating a sphere around institutions: through consultation and exchanges the latter obtain the knowledge they need for work. In negotiating situations or in moments of crisis, the Commission will continue to profit from the support of this network of European groups.

In the early days of the EC, the Commission gave near-exclusive preference to the channels of consultation offered by the European federations. On some occasions, it even furthered the creation of European groups, as was the case with the consumers' group. But more often, the Commission gave financial support to certain groups to ensure a balance in the representation of interests at Community level. For a long time, direct consultation carried out by the Commission was limited almost exclusively to Community groups. Recently however, the growth in Community power and the expansion of Community legislation have led the Commission to consult a wider range of socio-economic organizations. National and indeed regional organizations are present in numerous consultative committees devoted to agricultural policy, regional or social policy, and the Economic and Social Committee, but they were rarely present when the Commission drew up its proposals. Now, this type of consultation — based on a customary practice that does not have the institutional form of permanent consultative committees— constitutes one of the essential elements of the Community decision-making process.

Thus, for example, while the European Banking Federation customarily

makes its views known to the Commission, the latter also regularly listens to the opinions of the British Bankers' Association. The same applies to Confindustria and other national employers' confederations, or the Permanent Assembly of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry, which have set up agencies in Brussels. Such direct contacts allow the Commission to obtain a much clearer picture of the positions of national groups within European organizations, since these often fail to bring together differing interests or to adopt common positions that faithfully and substantially reflect the opinions of their membership. This tendency towards diversifying contacts and widening the circle of interlocutors is mirrored by the propensity of big national and multinational companies to draw closer to Community decision-making centers in Brussels. Large companies such as *Fiat*, *Mercedes-Benz*, *Rhône-Poulenc*, *Philips* or *ICI* have been established in Brussels for quite a while and, in particular, have networks of contacts at all levels with the Commission. Their presence (along with numerous American multinationals) is a further proof of the Community's dominant role. Another example is that of *Electricité de France* which has its own intervention unit at the Community; it can make its point of view known directly as well as through the normal channels provided by the International Union of Producers and Distributors of Electrical Energy and the Center for European Public Companies. Access is therefore provided not just through these European groupings and through the French government, but also by direct channels⁶.

Regional authorities and certain regional organizations are also being caught up in this process as it develops in line with the extension and strengthening of Community powers and following the establishment of the Regional Committee by the Maastricht Treaty. Thus, since becoming associated with the action of the Community, the German States have set up their own representative offices in Brussels. Regional collectivities from other countries have also tended to develop direct relationships with the Commission in order to make their interests better known to those responsible for regional policy and the European Regional Development Fund. Such is the case with a dozen French regions⁷, four

⁶ M. Petite, "Les lobbies européens", *Pouvoirs : revue d'études constitutionnelles et politiques* Nr. 48 (1989), p. 99 [special issue on 'Europe 1993'].

⁷ Anne MELICH, "Problématique centre-périphérie en Espagne : intégration des groupes catalans à la CE", pp. 169ff. in Dusan Sidjanski and Ural Ayberk, eds., *L'Europe du Sud dans la CE : analyse comparative des groupes d'intérêts et de leur insertion dans le réseau communautaire*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1990.

British local authorities and growing numbers of Spanish autonomous regions. As early as 1982, the Generality of Catalonia set up the Patronat Català pro Europa, a promotional and research body which opened up an office in Brussels as soon as Spain entered the Community.

Conclusion

For a pressure group to be able to act, it must in principle have a clear view of the desired goal, and it must be able to count on the support of its members. This two-fold desire will be expressed in many organizations by the requirement of unanimous agreement of their members, reflecting the configuration of forces enabling the member groupings to act. Indeed, European organization generally takes on a confederal form, providing the best guarantee for the protection of the particular interests of its members. And yet, this confederal form acts as a brake on the efficient functioning of a European group: COPA, for instance, was paralyzed due to lack of unanimity during the discussions on the question of a uniform price. This is why the groups have adopted in practice, and often in their statutes, the rule allowing the expression of minority opinion together with that of the majority. Thus, the functioning of the group is assured, without a brutal suppression of differences of opinion. More and more frequently, the groups present an agreed opinion. In exceptional cases, this unity of action can be assured by reference to the qualified minority.

The central groupings concentrate more often on action of a general character, and leave more specialized activity to sectional or subsectional groupings. UNICE acts as the authorized spokesman for the industries of the Community on all problems of general interest, or on those problems which touch upon questions relating to the common policy of the central organizations which are members of it. In so doing, UNICE does not try to cover all industrial activities, but retains for itself questions of common policy or of general interest. The specialized federations are all free to organize themselves and to act in their own field.

Specialized action is within the competence of technical organizations. In COMITEXIL, the general activities of the textile industry coexist with the parti-

cular interests of the sectors. Cotton, for instance, does not necessarily take up the same position as wool. Each of these sectors can take its own approach with the Brussels authorities. At the level of common textile interests, the organization of the entire branch intervenes. It is clear that in reality, both at the level of central organization and of intermediary or specialized ones, many combinations and much friction and opposition can arise. Without generalizing, one may say that the predominance of specialized organizations bears witness to the effectiveness of limited technical action. General action is difficult to define, and it has less chance of exerting real influence. A proposal to regulate beer or jam suggested by European organizations has a better chance of being adopted by the authorities of the EC than a general trade or anti-trust policy proposed by a central organization. In the present state of European integration, influence is exerted more effectively in the field of technical matters than on general questions.

At European level, the power structures of States and groups are in the process of being transformed. Moreover, the position is even more complex because a new tier has been superimposed upon the national and local levels. But this new scale has not yet acquired powers or position similar to a national community. In spite of a certain shift, the principal and original power remains indeed in the national units and groups, while the European groups attempt to maintain a minimum of coordination and common action between them. It appears that both in matters of policy reserved to the States and in economic and social matters, the division of functions and activities in the EC is still fluid.

Trends such as those described here can develop in a variety of ways. However, in so far as the developments continue in the direction outlined here, and in so far as the competencies of the Community are enlarged, especially through the strengthening of the European Parliament, the division of functions between the future political formations and the pressure groups will tend to become more precise. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the groups but above all the political parties, tended to play only a marginal role in supporting integration. Active power remained in the member States and in the central Council-Commission tandem of the EC in collaboration with the European Parliament. At the Community level, the Commission is the principal target of the pressure groups. But, reciprocally, the Commission exercises its influence through the pressure groups. There is complex interaction between pressure groups and the Commission.

During the 1980s, and especially since the implementation of the Single Euro-

pean Act, there has been a sharp rise in the number of lobbyists, finance and law advisers, consultants and specialized offices. The resources of these Community affairs specialists enable them to offer a wide range of services from legal and economic consultation to public relations. This network of thousands of lobbyists from various countries in the Community and also from the United States enables firms with problems — on account of distance or lack of knowledge or the necessary entrepreneurial status to undertake direct action on their own behalf — to draw closer to Community institutions and familiarize themselves with European affairs.

Gradually, European, national and regional groups, companies and their chiefs or their spokespersons, as well as lobbyists and advisers of all kinds are building up networks of players and observers in the great game of Europe.

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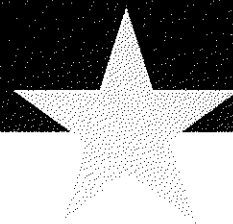
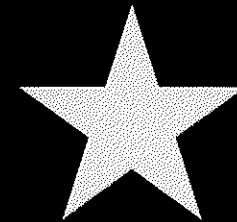
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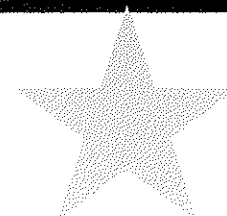
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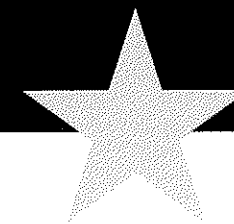
This paper analyses the evolution of pressure groups in the European Community and its successor, the European Union. It confirms the high degree of correlation between the expansion of powers at the European level and the emergence of European pressure groups, their structural development and more significantly their new forms of action.

The first period is characterized by the creation of more than 500 professional organizations in major EC areas, and by their traditional pressure group action. Classic networks such as these, functioning within the EC, can be regarded as proof or indication of the direct impact of the EC power.

New and original features, Sidjanski argues, appear in the present period : in addition to the classic European pressure groups, we are witnessing a mushrooming of interest groups and of lobbyists. The impact of the new communications system on their nature and their activities is obvious : structures tend to be less rigid, while hierarchical and even relatively small permanent staffs in Brussels are proving increasingly efficient in the effort to influence EU decision-making. Altogether these informal networks and relations are contributing substantially to the building of the new social basis of the European Union.



Dusan Sidjanski



Networks of European pressure groups

From the origins of the EEC to the EU

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